

Benjamin Cross House  
Main Street  
Alexandria  
Huntingdon County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5395

HABS  
FA,  
31-ALEX,  
12-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

BENJAMIN CROSS HOUSE

HABS No. PA-5395

HABS  
PA,  
31-ALEX,  
12-

Location: The Benjamin Cross House faces south on the north side of Main Street approximately 150' from the westernmost edge of Alexandria Borough, Porter Township, Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania.

Present Owner: Freda Lloyd.

Present Use: Single-family dwelling.

Significance: The Benjamin Cross House is attributed to one of the few known carpenters/builders in nineteenth-century Alexandria. Constructed for himself, the house stands out as a showpiece of Greek Revival detailing, compared to neighboring residences. Architecturally it is vernacular, except for the front-facing gable end that is a highly ornamental composition of four Doric pilasters and a deep, dentiled pediment.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: ca. 1851. This is implied in the 1858 deed, and the fact that as a carpenter/house builder, Cross would probably have commenced building his own dwelling soon after acquiring the land in 1850. Also, Cross was taxed for "one lot and improvements" valued at \$150 in 1851, and a year later the the same property was assessed at \$450.
2. Architect: Benjamin Cross built this house for himself, in addition to other Alexandria residences. These include two extant buildings east of this lot.
3. Original and subsequent owners: This lot fronts 60' on the north side of Main Street, extending back therefrom at right angles thereto 200' to a public alley, bounded on the east and west by residences, and recorded as lot No. 19 in the borough plan. It is located in the Trimble Addition to the borough.

The following is a chain of title to the land on which the structure stands. Reference is to the Recorder of Deeds Office of the County of Huntingdon, Pennsylvania.

1839 Deed September 16, 1839, recorded in Volume H2, Page 57.  
Eliza Trimble (administrator for Dr. Trimble)  
TO  
Thomas Patterson.

1850 Deed September 11, 1850, recorded in Volume H2, Page 58.  
Thomas Patterson

TO  
Benjamin Cross.

1858 Deed December 1, 1858, recorded in Volume P2, Pages 16-17.  
Benjamin and Mary Cross  
TO  
Ann Cross (Benjamin's mother).

1863 Deed December 8, 1863, recorded in Volume R2, Page 513.  
Ann Cross  
TO  
Mary M. Cross et al.

1894 Deed January 13, 1894, recorded in Volume E4, Page 414.  
Mary M. Cross, et al.  
TO  
Charles Cross.

1900 Deed September 10, 1900, recorded in Volume R4, Page 137.  
Charles M. Cross (wife Laura L. and mother, Mary M.)  
TO  
Henry Neff.

1916 Deed September 21, 1916, recorded in Volume B6, Page 274.  
Henry A. Neff  
TO  
Bertha A. Lloyd.

1948 Deed May 3, 1948, recorded in Volume R8, Page 250.  
Bertha A. Lloyd  
TO  
Freda and George Lloyd.

4. Original plans and construction: No original plans or drawings have been located. This is a two-story, frame Greek Revival house built on a variation of the side-hall plan. Although its three-bay south gable end fronts Main Street, entrance is gained through the long, east wall. A porch sheltered the front door of the original rectangular block.
  5. Alterations and additions: A one-story porch now wraps around the east and north facades. A small, one-story frame addition measuring 12' x 16' was added to the northwest corner of the north wall sometime during the last forty years, according to the present owner.
- B. Historical Context: Benjamin Cross is identified as a 27-year-old carpenter in the 1850 Census records. At least three of several houses attributed to him are still standing.

Cross was active in the Alexandria community: In 1871 he served as a town burgess, and he was an officer of the Odd Fellows Society in 1872 (Africa, 427).

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The south facade of this two-story house reflects textbook Greek Revival styling: a deep, pedimented front-gable, and a three-bay facade articulated by four pilasters. In contrast, the east facade includes an irregular and scant grouping of windows. The plan is a variation on the three-bay side-hall arrangement.
2. Condition of the fabric: Good.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The main block measures 26' x 30'; the frame addition on the northwest corner, 12' x 16'.
2. Foundation: Stone.
3. Wall construction: Frame with horizontal siding.
4. Structural system, framing: Frame.
5. Porches: A one-story porch with a hipped roof wraps around the east, and part of the north, facades (7' x 36'). Five Victorian turnposts support the porch, which terminates under the northeastern bay on the east wall. A frame base and lattice-work infill is supported by brick piers. Four central wooden steps access the deck.
6. Chimneys: There are two chimneys: An exterior brick chimney is located near the center of the west wall, and an interior brick chimney (that appears to have been rebuilt) rises from the northeast quarter of the east slope.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The wood front door features two lower panels and decorative six-light glazing above--two large center panels flanked by two smaller panels; a two-light transom is overhead.
  - b. Windows: The windows on the south facade, second floor, are six-over-six-light double-hung sash; two-over-two-light double-hung sash on the first story. The same glazing arrangement exists on the east and west walls, as well. The east facade is notably irregular, with a single

window in the upper north corner, and two windows in the northern end of the first floor. The first-floor shutters are typically paneled on the bottom, louvered on top; the original metal shutter hardware remains.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Front-facing gable with asphalt shingles and tar paper.
- b. Cornice: The cornice reflects a blending of formal and vernacular Greek Revival styling. The cornice, frieze and plain architrave are supported by four pilasters. The entablature features dentil molding below the pediment.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The first-floor room arrangement reflects a modified side-hall plan. The entry hall in the southeast corner leads north under the stairway to the kitchen. The kitchen and a pantry-like room in the northwest corner of the plan occupy the rear portion of the floor; a living room, with a fireplace in the northwest corner, occupy the front section of the plan. Doorways link the hall and kitchen, kitchen and pantry, pantry and addition, and kitchen and dining room. The two windows are located in the east wall of the kitchen.
2. Stairways: The entry stairway is turned with a single landing; it is carpeted.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster.

D. Site:

1. General setting: The Benjamin Cross House is located across the street from the old brewhouse; it is surrounded on the east and west by other residences, and in the rear by an alley.
2. Landscaping, enclosures: A low hedge separates the Cross property from that to the east.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Old views (in Hartslog Heritage, 65).

B. Primary and unpublished sources:

Porter Township tax records, 1819 to 1859, Huntingdon County Historical Society.

Alexandria Borough tax records, 1859 to 1873, Huntingdon County Historical Society and Huntingdon County Courthouse.

Huntingdon County Deed Books and Probate Records, Huntingdon County Courthouse,  
Huntingdon, Pennsylvania.

Huntingdon County Tax Map -- Alexandria, 01-01-15.

Huntingdon County Historical Society survey sheets.

C. Secondary and published sources:

Africa, J. Simpson. History of Huntingdon and Blair Counties, Pennsylvania.  
Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1883.

Harshbarger, Jean P., Nancy R. Taylor, Sara H. Zabriskie, and F.R. Zabriskie. Hartslog  
Heritage. State College, Pennsylvania: K-B Offset Printing, Inc., 1975.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was conducted by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record in cooperation with the America's Industrial Heritage Project under the directorship of Randy Cooley; AIHP is an undertaking of the National Park Service, based in Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania. Recorded under the direction of Robert J. Kapsch, chief of HABS/HAER, the project was completed during summer 1988 at the HABS field office in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Project leader was Alison K. Hoagland, senior HABS historian; field supervisor was Dorothy Burlingame, University of Vermont; project historian, Karen Genskow, Sangamon State University. Large-format photography is by David Ames. Editing of the final report was done by Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.

This report was completed as part of a larger project documenting two canal towns--Saltsburg, on the Western Division of the Pennsylvania Mainline Canal, and Alexandria, on the Juniata Division--flanking the Allegheny Divide. Twenty-one reports on other buildings in Alexandria, an overview history of Alexandria (HABS No. PA-5407), and of canal town development in Pennsylvania (HABS No. PA-5666) are part of the HABS/HAER collection. Twenty-two reports on buildings in Saltsburg (Indiana County) and an overview history of Saltsburg (HABS No. PA-5438) are also available. Results of the project were published as Two Historic Pennsylvania Canal Towns: Alexandria and Saltsburg, Sara Amy Leach, editor (Washington, DC: Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, March 1989).